

'To General Blake, at Sea.'

Whitehall, 13th September, 1655.

SIR,

We have received yours from Cascais Bay, of the 30th of August; and were very sensible of the wants of the Fleet as they were represented by your last before; and had given directions for three-months provisions, -which we all prepared, and sent from Portsmouth, some time since, under the convoy of the Bristol Frigate. But the Commissioners of the Admiralty have had Letters yesterday that they were forced back, by contrary winds, into Plymouth, and are there now attending for the first slack of wind, to go to sea again. And the Commissioners of the Admiralty are instructed to quicken them by an express; although it is become very doubtful whether those provisions can 'now' come in time for supplying of your wants.

And for what concerns the fighting of the Fleet of Spain, whereof your said Letter makes mention, we judge it of great consequence, and much for the service of the Commonwealth, that this Fleet were fought; as well in order to the executing your former Instructions, as for the preservation of our ships and interest in the West Indies: and our meaning was, by our former Order, and still is, That the Fleet which shall come for the guarding of the Plate Fleet, as we conceive this doth, should be attempting. But in respect we have not certain knowledge of the strength of the Spanish Fleet, nor of the condition of your Fleet, which may alter every day, -we think it reasonable, at this distance, not to oblige you by any positive order to engage; but must, as we do hereby, leave it to you, who are upon the place, and know the state of things, to handle the rein as you shall find your opportunity and the ability of the Fleet to be: -as we also do for your coming home, either for want of provisions or in respect of the season of the year, at such time as you shall judge it to be for the safety of the Fleet. And we trust the Lord will guide and be with you in the management of this thing.

Your very loving friend,
OLIVER P.

'P.S.' In case your return should be so soon as that you should not make use of the Provisions now sent you, or but little thereof, we desire you to cause them to be preserved; they may be applied to other uses.